Just Passing By

It is one hour past noon on a somewhat typical English Winter day: a morning of rain and gusty winds, and not that cold, but with that dull light brought by overcast skies which - together with the dampness wrought by hours and hours of rain and with trees bereft of green - makes one to dream, if only for a moment, of those warm lightful days of Summer.

So here I am, fortunate in so many ways compared to so many in so very many other places; free, following a repleteful meal, to sit within a house at a desk and muse again on certain metaphysical questions, with music of centuries past - Lachrimae Antiquae, by Dowland - having been reproduced by almost magical modern means, just ended; while, elsewhere in the world, the usual mayhem, violence, suffering - and killings - continue. And continue in the name of one cause, one dream, one hope, or another; continue in dutiful service, many times, of one interpretation of one faith, or another; or, as so often, continue because of that primal servitude as when a man betakes a woman to force himself upon her just because he wants to or because he can.

No empathy, there; present and past. No restraint, however wrought or brought: human, δαίμων, wyrdful, consciential, divinity, or divine. No culture of pathei-mathos, or at least no personal lessons learned therefrom.

But of course there are, they always are, the inevitable excuses from so many for so much suffering done: words and speeches; dogma, ideology, demagoguery, deceit. For there is this idea, this manifesto - or that. And, whatever the words, the descriptions, the idea, the ideology, whatever the excuses, someone - so many - suffer.

I know, for I have been there, done - and said and written - that, decade following decade. I know all the excuses, all the primal feelings, all the dogma, the ideologies: the violence, the mayhem, the deaths, the hatred, and the incitement of the division - the separation-of-otherness - that so divides.

How, then, I ask - partly in hope of expiation - can we ever hope to end this? This repetition of so causing suffering, generation following generation, millennia after millennia. Yet again I admit that I do not really know, although I have this feeling, born of my own suffering-causing past, that it is our surety - our certainty-of-knowing - that does so mislead and has so misled we fallible, we so error-prone, human beings; conveying to us as such surety surely does that sense of purpose that can so vitalize our so short mortal lives. For I sense that it is a personal empathy that we need; not words; not some surety whose genesis is some ideology, some idea, some speech, some manifesto, some philosophy, some book, some cause, some fervent religious faith, or even some idealistic dream of a better future wrought by having to do certain things 'now'.

A need for the empathy that engenders in us such a sympatheia with another living being that their fear is our fear, their pain our pain, their grief our grief, and their joy our joy; and not in some airy-fairy way but such that we feel - bodily, mentally - exactly what they do. How, then, could we hurt them, those others who are ourself?

How, then, could we cause anyone to suffer? How then could we humiliate them, deprive them of dignity? How then could we manipulate and deceive them? How then could we torture, do violence to, and kill, them? How, then, could we sally forth to war to injure and to kill?

A few such empaths already exist; perhaps have always existed, or maybe have slowly emerged a millennia - or more, or less - ago. Empaths: those who physically feel the pain of others in a particular part of their body; those who sense, who feel, what eyes or voice convey or try to conceal. Those who, so feeling, so sensing, are become or can be so sensitive that they quite often have to reclusively keep themselves away; sometimes more at peace, in their empathy-bred humility, with animals and Nature than with others of their human kind. Some empaths naturally born; perhaps slightly more by pathei- mathos made. Are such empaths, then, our future? An evolutionary leap? And if so, can or even should such empathy be developed in others? Or should we - however well-intentioned we consider ourselves to be - not, and never again, interfere at all, but rather let whatever comes-into-being come-into-being, in its own way and in its own species of worldly, human, time?

Empathy seems to me to be the kernel of that way of living, that personal character, that perhaps all spiritual ways, and all mysticism, have saught, and do seek, to encourage. Manifest as this is in compassion, humility, a gentleness, and an appreciation of the numinous: of a placing of ourselves in perspective, of we as fallible mortals prone because of our hubris to upset the natural balance. But empathy needs no deities; no god or God; no concept of sinner and saved; no heaven, and no mechanism such as rebirth and karma. There is empathy, and that is all.

An empathy engendering a silent interior deeply personal knowing, beyond words, of the illusion of our self. Of how 'we' are but one connexion to all that is, was, or ever will be. Of how the connexions encompass the Cosmos and not just our planet, Earth. A knowing that we are visitors just passing by; of how our connexion is presenced, temporarily, here where and how we are; and of how it can flux, change, to be what it could be, embodied perhaps in - as - some part of Nature here, or as some type of life somewhere in a galaxy near or far distant. A knowing of how it is, or seems to be, our sense of self that closes this our connexion to our potentiality of being some presenced emanation of future life, and how that connexion is or can be kept open, alive, by a feeling for the life, the beings, the worlds, the Cosmos, beyond our microcosmic mortal selves. But how can those living in poverty - or who are homeless, or hungry, or dispossessed, or oppressed, or abused, or sick, or traumatised or injured by conflict and war, or subjected to brutality and injustice - appreciate, let alone consider how they might live by, all this? It is just mysticism; devoid of practical purpose to those in need of the basics, the staples, of life and day to day living.

Why, then, do I chunter on, pondering on empathy? Partly in hope; partly in expiation. But mostly because it is all I now seem to have; as an artist or musician have their artisements. Long gone now those deeds born of a desire to change the world through action, for all I personally wrought through my certitude-of-knowing was suffering. And such

knowing, such an intuition of understanding, as becalms me now makes me to see the longer, the more millennial, view; of a Cosmos changing as it changes entirely independent of us few terrans here, and of how nations, States, empires, tyrants, dogma, ideology - and even a cherished faith - pass away; the only seeming constant "a mysterium esoteric even to this day" [1], our human nature, jumelle as it is in essence, and why we (apparently uniquely among life presenced here on Earth) are, as one ancient metaphysical tract expressed it, 'deathful of body yet deathless the inner mortal'. For we might also well ask, as the student of Pœmandres did: "You who are earth-bound, why do you embrace death when you have the means to partake of immortality?" [2] The means, that is (at least according to my fallible and limited understanding), of empathy.

David Myatt
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1. Corpus Hermeticum, Pœmandres, 16. Translated by DWM. Poemandres is included in *Corpus Hermeticum: Eight Tractates*. ISBN 978-1976452369. Gratis Open Access pdf: https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/eight-tractates-v2-print.pdf

2. Corpus Hermeticum, Pœmandres, 28.

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